

FINAL

**Statement
of
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Before the Subcommittee
on
National Parks, Recreation and Public Lands
Committee on Resource
United States House of Representatives

Concerning
H.R. 3936 - Designation of the Shoshone National Recreation Trail
April 16, 2002**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me here today to discuss H.R. 3936. I am Gloria Manning, Associate Deputy Chief, National Forest System.

H.R. 3936 would designate a series of existing and planned roads and trails on and around the Wasatch-Cache National Forest in Utah, as the Shoshone National Recreation Trail. The Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, State of Utah and local governments, and other groups and individuals have been working for some time to establish the Shoshone Trail. Because H.R. 3936 is consistent with existing authority that allows the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to designate the existing portions of this trail system, and with landowner approval, those portions not on federal lands, as a National Recreation Trail, we support enactment of this bill.

H.R. 3936 would provide motorized recreation opportunities in northern Utah by designating 337 miles of existing OHV (Off Highway Vehicle) roads and trails as the Shoshone National Recreation Trail. From our viewpoint this makes sense. OHV use is an important and increasing demand on public lands, that when properly planned and monitored, can be accommodated without significant resource damage. Established OHV roads and trails meet the demand for this form of recreation while potentially decreasing unauthorized uses in more sensitive areas.

The Forest Service, along with our federal, State, and local partners has been working to establish an OHV trail system. Currently under consideration in the ongoing effort to establish the Shoshone Trail are the 337

miles of existing roads and trails that now permit OHV use and would be designated the Shoshone National Recreation Trail under H.R. 3936. Lands involved include 199 miles of National Forest System roads, all of which currently allow OHV use, Bureau of Land Management roads, State of Utah roads, and private and county roads.

To be fully successful in this endeavor, several issues, including public access to roads and trails that cross both public and private lands, will need to be explored in coming months, and support from local communities is critical. The good news is that many communities are already working to develop motorized recreation opportunities. Examples of on-going planning can be seen in Box Elder County in Northern Utah, Cache County near Logan, and the Wasatch Front counties of Weber and Davis.

Challenges for the future include providing access to the trail from local communities. As the population of northern Utah has grown, so has the demand for various forms of recreation, including OHV opportunities. Many of the foothills and private lands adjacent to National Forest System lands have been developed, and in many cases, public lands are not accessible.

The completed trail, as envisioned by H.R. 3936, will require the acquisition of new rights of way and easements. We cannot do this alone. We must develop partnerships with the State, county, and municipal jurisdictions to ensure that public access is secured before development occurs, since it often becomes impossible to acquire access after those areas are fully developed.

In addition, successful management of this trail may require state and local jurisdictions to carefully consider the impact of their regulations that govern OHV use. For example, those communities along the Wasatch Front that become integral portals to the trail system may also permit ATV use on city streets, as currently allowed by the community of Richfield.

Mr. Chairman, we realize that National Forest System lands in northern Utah play a significant role in providing outdoor recreation opportunities. However, in the context of all land ownership, the National Forest System is only a part of the whole. A large percentage of the land is in private ownership and close working relationships with private landowners and local governments would be required to fully implement the Shoshone National Recreation Trail.

We are pleased to work with Members of this Committee, other federal agencies and officials from the State of Utah, as well as local governments to provide varied recreation opportunities and ensure that natural resources are managed appropriately.

This concludes my testimony. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.